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EFFECTIVENESS OF UNFPA'S PUBLICATIONS PROGRAMME

Report of the Executive Director

BACKGROUND

1. This report is being submitted to the Executive Board in response to decision 95/35, paragraph 8, which requested the Executive Director to present to the Board at its second regular session of 1996 a detailed report on the effectiveness of the UNFPA publications programme, in accordance with paragraph 31 of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and taking into account the need for publications to be available in a range of languages.

2. It should be recalled that the Governing Council, at its thirty-eighth session in June 1991, agreed to the rationale set forth by the Executive Director in document DP/1991/37 concerning the funding of UNFPA publications (decision 91/36, para. 12) as follows: (a) publications that are designed to promote greater awareness and understanding of activities of UNFPA *per se* should be financed from the APSS budget; (b) publications that are designed to promote dialogue and exchange on the wider issues of population and development themselves should be financed from the programme budget.

3. Since the preparation of the previous publications report in 1991, the Fund's publications have increased both in number and in range, in response to UNFPA's enhanced advocacy role in

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connection with the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and to increased demand from governments, population professionals, colleagues in the United Nations system, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) seeking to operationalize the ICPD Programme of Action in their own development plans. UNFPA is also now more active in donor countries in its advocacy efforts to develop a stronger constituency for population and development activities and to meet the ICPD goal that one-third of population resources should come from industrialized countries.

4. This report reviews the UNFPA publications programme in light of the ICPD and the Fund's enhanced role in advocacy. It is presented in four sections. The first section reviews the policy development of UNFPA's publications programme, highlighting the legislative authority for the Fund's public information and awareness creation activities. The second section presents the findings of an independent analysis of UNFPA publications. The third section examines the cost-management of the UNFPA publications programme, including the use of the latest technology to produce and disseminate UNFPA publications and public information. The report concludes with a recommendation for the consideration of the Board. This report should be read in conjunction with the Fund's biennial budget estimates for administrative and programme support services for the 1996-1997 biennium (document DP/1995/42), which was adopted by the Board at its third regular session in 1995.

I. POLICY DEVELOPMENT OF UNFPA'S PUBLICATIONS PROGRAMME

5. Public information activities have been central to UNFPA's mandate since its inception. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in resolution 1763 (LIV) of 18 May 1973, stated that UNFPA should "promote awareness, both in developed and developing countries of the social, economic and environmental implications of national and international population problems, of the human rights aspects of family planning and of possible strategies to deal with them in accordance with the plans and priorities of each country". That was later reaffirmed by ECOSOC in its resolution 1986/7 of 21 May 1986.

6. At its thirty-seventh session in June 1990, the Governing Council supported "the important contribution of UNFPA publications and other public information efforts in promoting awareness, both in developed and developing countries, of population issues and their social, economic and environmental implications" (decision 90/35 A, para. 17). The Fund was urged, subsequently, by the General Assembly in resolution 45/216 of 21 December 1990 "to continue to undertake activities aimed at building up better awareness of population issues" (para. 13).

7. In November 1989, the International Forum on Population in the Twenty-first Century adopted the Amsterdam Declaration which urged UNFPA "to strengthen further the capacity of UNFPA to foster international awareness creation" of population matters. A year later, the Executive

Director reported to the General Assembly through the Governing Council and ECOSOC stressing that an indispensable component in efforts to increase and sustain the political support required to mobilize sufficient financial, human and institutional resources for population activities was a strong programme of information, education and communication aimed at political leaders, planners, parliamentarians, community and religious leaders and other policy makers.

8. Following the historic global consensus achieved at the ICPD in Cairo in 1994, UNFPA's information mandate was significantly increased to include leading advocacy efforts to promote the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action. At its annual session in June 1995, the Executive Board endorsed the core programme areas of UNFPA and requested the Executive Director to concentrate UNFPA assistance within the core areas of reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health, population and development strategies, and advocacy (decision 95/15, para. 4).

9. These resolutions and decisions have had a direct impact on UNFPA publications and public information activities, which are an integral part of UNFPA's advocacy efforts. Specifically, UNFPA must increase awareness of the role of population in the development process, build support for the goals of the ICPD and for UNFPA programme and resource-building strategies based on the Cairo consensus, and create and strengthen awareness of UNFPA's role in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action.

10. To carry out these mandates, UNFPA, primarily through its Information and External Relations Division (IERD), produces the following regular publications: UNFPA *Annual Report*, POPULI, a quarterly journal, *Dispatches*, a monthly newsletter on UNFPA policy and programme developments, *Population Issues Briefing Kit*, a primer for World Population Day and beyond; the *State of World Population*, a key report and important annual event in population information, and brochures and posters to promote World Population Day as well as the image and activities of the Fund. In addition, UNFPA produces two important reference tools in the *Inventory of Population Projects in Developing Countries Around the World* and the *Guide to Sources of International Population Assistance*. UNFPA also produces special publications in support of the ICPD and to enhance general population awareness.

11. Additionally, UNFPA carries out a number of specialized activities, including the establishment and maintenance of an Internet gopher site, in collaboration with the Population Information Network, for electronic dissemination of UNFPA information materials. E-mail is used for the dissemination of briefing notes on UNFPA-related issues to the network of UNFPA country offices.

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II. ANALYSIS OF UNFPA PUBLICATIONS

12. To supplement its own evaluations and periodic readership surveys and to help prepare this report, UNFPA commissioned an independent survey of all its publications to assess their effectiveness for their different targeted audiences. Opinions were sought from key media users of UNFPA publications, United Nations system information specialists, governments, UNFPA Executive Board focal points, NGOs involved in population activities, UNFPA field offices and important public affairs/public relations specialists. A questionnaire was prepared asking respondents to rate each of the Fund's publications from "most effective" to "least effective" and to make whatever comments they wished. The survey results, incorporated in this report, reflect the responses of targeted key sectors of the readership of UNFPA's publications programme, not the readership as a whole.

13. The overall response to the questions asked was extremely positive, indicating that the publications were read, well-received and accomplishing their purpose. The *Annual Report* was considered not only an excellent summary of the Fund's yearly activities, but a standard reference tool for government officials, UNFPA field offices and NGOs. The news media found the *State of World Population* report an important news event and reference tool.

14. All UNFPA publications, except the *Inventory of Population Projects in Developing Countries Around the World* and the *Guide to Sources of International Population Assistance*, are printed in, at the least, the three working languages of the United Nations (English, French and Spanish), as well as increasingly in Arabic. The *Annual Report* is published in all six official languages of the United Nations, and the *State of World Population* report is published in the six official languages of the United Nations, plus many other languages, notably those at the country level.

15. UNFPA publications are designed for specific audiences, especially for policy makers and senior programme managers, not for professional demographers. They are based on programme experience and the analyses of population issues carried out by other technical units of the United Nations system, especially the United Nations Population Division, and outside academic and research institutions. UNFPA's publications do not duplicate any of the publications of these other bodies but, rather, complement and supplement them, in addition to providing their own special perspective.

16. The remainder of this section examines the publications produced by UNFPA during 1995, noting in particular the purpose of each and its intended audience. It should be noted that each of these publications is distributed to all countries in which there is a United Nations office and/or a United Nations Information Centre.

State of World Population report

17. The Executive Director's *State of World Population* report is the centrepiece of UNFPA's worldwide media communications and advocacy efforts during the year. The most widely-read of UNFPA's publications, the report is sometimes perceived as the annual report of the Fund.

18. The *State of World Population* report has been published annually since 1978, and its release has become a major world media event. For the last several years, the major launch site for the report has been London, while UNFPA field offices worldwide conduct their own launches for local media and government officials. To meet the increasing demand for the publication, the print order has soared to 46,000 copies in 21 languages, including the six official languages of the United Nations.

19. The report has broken new ground in several respects: its primary audience, the media, has responded with great enthusiasm to its publication each year, and journalists regularly refer to the report as a source of information. Through seminars and workshops, the report has been used as a tool for raising awareness of population and development issues among the media. The publicity generated by the report has also played a significant role in creating awareness of population issues not only in developed countries but in developing countries as well.

20. The report has found increasing acceptability among other audiences, notably the population community, and is now regularly cited in professional journals. Schools and universities report that they draw on it in their courses, and there are regular requests for permission to use material from the report in publications. NGOs have found the report equally useful as a reference and educational tool.

21. In its subject matter, the report has frequently led the way to broader discussion of key issues. For example, the 1988 edition dealt with the interactions between population, development and the environment, 1989 was entitled "Investing in Women" and was a strong advocate for placing women at the centre of population and development activities; 1990 dealt with population and sustainable development, 1992 inter alia with the relationship between population and economic growth, and 1993 with migration. The 1994 *State of World Population* report was launched by the Executive Director to an overflow press conference attended by national and international reporters. Coming on the eve of the ICPD, the report facilitated the media's efforts to understand the various issues surrounding the conference and to explain these issues to the public. The report, which focused on the empowerment of women and reproductive health, followed closely the main themes of the draft ICPD Programme of Action and became a standard reference tool at Cairo, especially among the media. The 1995 report's detailed discussion of the components of reproductive health was particularly useful in explaining the significance of the comprehensive approach to reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health, endorsed by the ICPD.

POPULI

22. POPULI is the Fund's most visible periodical. Its goal, derived from the organization's mandate, is to promote awareness of population and related issues, policies, and programmes in both developed and developing countries. In so doing, it seeks to win respect for the Fund as a source of credible and timely information and comment, and to increase awareness of population's place in overall sustainable human development.

23. First published in 1974, POPULI was relaunched in 1992 as a general-readership news magazine. Readership nearly doubled in the first 12 months following its relaunch, of the recorded 92 per cent increase, almost evenly divided between developed and developing countries, the fastest growth in readership was among its key target audiences: the media, NGOs, and educational institutions. Indeed, among individual direct subscribers, journalists account for 39 per cent, academic institutions and libraries, 27 per cent, and NGOs, 14 per cent. Growth in readership has been sustained so that 44 per cent of current readers began reading POPULI after the 1992 relaunch, according to a mid-1995 survey.

24. Another indication of the usefulness of POPULI's special approach -- presenting a broad array of subject matter and opinion in language easily understood by a general readership -- is that 74 per cent of readers said that the information they found in POPULI was not easily available elsewhere, despite the fact that they also read many other leading population and development publications from the United Nations, NGO, academic, and commercial sectors. Sixty-two per cent of readers used the information gained from the magazine for their professional work, and 71 per cent, to inform others. Readers cited the variety of themes and the broad and sometimes critical perspectives presented as among the chief reasons for giving the magazine a "very good" rating.

25. More to the point of POPULI's aim of engendering discourse on population and development issues, media use of the magazine's contents has increased, with articles reproduced, excerpted, and cited widely in national media, especially but not exclusively in developing countries. At the same time, classroom use of POPULI in institutes of higher education and research in developing and developed regions is increasing, as is reproduction of the magazine's contents in textbooks and teaching kits for secondary schools. Even among general readers, 86 per cent share their copy with others; 49.6 per cent with one to five persons; 19 per cent with 10 or more.

26. Published four times a year in English, French and Spanish, 7,000 copies of POPULI are distributed by UNFPA field offices, UNDP and United Nations Information Centres, with another 6,200 individual direct subscriptions administered by UNFPA New York. The magazine's periodicity was reduced in mid-1995 from ten to four times a year in order to free up limited budgetary and staff resources to accommodate publication of the programme bulletin *Dispatches* (see below). However, 68.6 per cent of readers said they would prefer to continue to receive the magazine ten times a year.

Dispatches

27 Launched in 1995 and directed primarily at colleagues in UNFPA, the United Nations system, counterpart government agencies, and NGOs, *Dispatches* is a digest of programme and policy initiatives designed for a busy readership. Articles are presented for quick reading and include a list of sources of further information. The publication is meant to be easily photocopied or filed for future reference. It is highly rated by colleagues and counterparts alike as very useful for programme personnel, inter-agency communications, quick updates on project information, and as an easy means of informing government officials and NGO collaborators about developments in the Fund. In consequence, participation by field offices in gathering information for publication is increasing, as is use of *Dispatches* by the media as a source of ideas for coverage and as a background resource. Published ten times a year in English, French and Spanish, 10,000 copies of *Dispatches* are distributed through UNFPA offices and another 5,500 copies through UNDP, United Nations Information Centres, as well as to the media.

Annual Report

28 The *Annual Report* by the Executive Director, published in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, is the basic information document about UNFPA activities. The aim of the report is to provide a composite picture of the Fund's work during the year under review. It is the only UNFPA public information document that combines financial and programme highlights of the Fund. The report focuses on new initiatives and notable developments in the UNFPA programme, particularly in individual countries and regions, and highlights programme achievements, as well as common problems and constraints and the measures taken to deal with them. The report is distributed free of charge to all interested officials in both developed and developing countries and to population experts and academics. Recipients also include UNFPA country offices, United Nations Information Centres, United Nations missions, NGOs active in the population and development field, libraries and demographic training institutes.

29 In recent years, the Executive Board has welcomed the new approach to the *Annual Report* with its focus on vital thematic issues and the use of lessons learned to support its analysis. The self-critical evaluation of the outcome of important projects and programmes was also appreciated by the Board. The detailed review in the report of regional activities as well as evaluation activities produced information and insights that were readily accessible and understandable.

30 The 1994 report was particularly helpful in explaining post-ICPD consultations and in linking recent United Nations world conferences to programme activities. Board members noted that the report clearly showed UNFPA's commitment to translating the recommendations of the ICPD Programme of Action into actions at the country level. They also welcomed the open discussion in the document on evaluation. As noted in the independent survey, the layout, typography and

illustrations give the report a sense of dealing with live vibrant issues, and not just a summary of a year's past activities.

31. Those surveyed rated the report as one of the Fund's most effective publications. They found the format improved, the financial and programme highlights, tables, and General Assembly and ECOSOC resolutions and Executive Board decisions very helpful, the information very useful for donors and recipients alike. They suggested that future reports include more details on country programmes and certain geographical regions not frequently treated.

32. About 28,000 copies of the report were printed in 1995, including 15,000 in English, 5,000 in French, 4,000 in Spanish, 2,000 in Arabic, plus approximately 1,000 each in Chinese and Russian.

Population Issues Briefing Kit

33. The *Population Issues Briefing Kit* is one of UNFPA's most in-demand publications after the *State of World Population* report. Its topics include reproductive rights and reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health; population, development and the empowerment of women; population and sustainable development; population trends in general and by region; migration and urbanization; population information, education and communication; population data and research; population programmes and the family. Published since 1990 and updated (statistics and message) each year with new sections on topics of concern and distributed widely on World Population Day, the *Briefing Kit* is directed at a general audience as well as towards people who know development but who may be less than fully conversant with the key role of population in development strategy. Distributed in four languages, the *Briefing Kit* is used as a reference tool by UNFPA staff, the public in general, government officials, journalists, other United Nations bodies, NGOs, researchers, and by universities and secondary schools. It is often cited as a source of population information in journals, magazines and other publications. Approximately 34,000 copies of the *Briefing Kit* were printed in 1995, including 18,000 in English, 7,000 in French, 5,000 in Spanish and 4,000 in Arabic.

Inventory of Population Projects in Developing Countries Around the World

34. The *Inventory* is the only compendium of its kind to provide concise information about internationally-assisted population projects in developing countries, funded or implemented by multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental organizations during a one-year period. It was launched in response to requests for a listing of population projects planned or in progress, in order to avoid duplication of assistance and to ascertain where, and what type of, assistance would be useful. The *Inventory* has been issued annually since 1975 and funded through the programme budget.

35. Since its inception, the former UNDP Governing Council regularly expressed support for the *Inventory*. By decision 86/34, the Council requested the UNFPA Executive Director "to continue producing on a regular basis the annual *Inventory of Population Projects in Developing Countries Around the World* ... and include in the *Inventory* an overview of major trends and developments in the population programmes".

36. The latest edition of the *Inventory*, published in 1995, provides information on programmes and projects in 156 developing countries, in addition to regional and interregional projects.

37. The main target audience for the *Inventory* are programme planners and policy makers. For 1995, 2,000 copies of the *Inventory* were produced, and initial distribution covered all agencies and organizations contributing information, as well as United Nations missions, UNDP Resident Representatives and UNFPA Representatives; senior officials of the United Nations, UNDP and specialized agencies; libraries, research institutes and training centres; and individuals and organizations active in the population field.

38. The main constraint on increasing the effectiveness of the *Inventory* relates to the amount of time required for the very extensive data collection efforts involved. However, despite the time lapse between the reporting period and the release date, the *Inventory* is still an invaluable source of information that cannot be obtained from any other publication. UNFPA, therefore, continues to explore ways for establishing an information system that can help automate data collection and respond faster to the needs of the target audience through electronic transmission.

Guide to Sources of International Population Assistance

39. The *Guide to Sources of International Population Assistance* was mandated by the 1974 World Population Plan of Action which called on UNFPA, "in cooperation with all organizations responsible for international population assistance, to produce a guide for international assistance in population matters which would be made available to recipient institutions and be revised periodically" (para. 105).

40. Issued triennially as a companion volume to the *Inventory*, the publication shows the types of technical and financial assistance in the population field that are provided by more than 200 multilateral, bilateral and regional agencies and NGOs, as well as universities, research institutes and training organizations.

41. Support for the *Guide* has been confirmed by the UNDP Governing Council on several occasions. At its thirty-sixth session, the Council again requested the UNFPA Executive Director "to continue producing on a regular basis ... the triennial *Guide to Sources of International Population Assistance*" (decision 86/34).

42. Like the *Inventory*, the *Guide* is widely used by individuals and organizations concerned with the funding or implementation of population programmes and projects. The process of data collection and distribution is undertaken jointly with the *Inventory* for better coordination and cost-effectiveness. While both publications share the same main target audience, the *Guide* is also used for general information purposes among the wider public. The 1994 edition of the *Guide* had a print run of 3,000 copies in view of the special needs of the ICPD.

43. The *Guide* is unique in the scope of information provided, as it covers different types of organizations and is not limited to any geographical area, compared to other handbooks. However, given the frequent changes inherent in development assistance, the accuracy of the information in the *Guide* declines considerably in the last year of each edition and reduces the publication's usefulness. UNFPA has reviewed the possibility of turning the *Guide* into an annual publication, but resource constraints have so far precluded this option.

Summary of Programme of Action

44. As an initial step to assist the ICPD task force that was set up to promote the Cairo goals, UNFPA, together with the United Nations Population Division and the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI), published a summary of the ICPD Programme of Action in four languages, Arabic, English, French and Spanish, and distributed more than 30,000 copies worldwide. The remaining stock (some 20,000 copies) was used to meet daily requests and for special seminars and meetings which required bulk copies.

Advocating Change

45. *Advocating Change*, dealing with population, empowerment of women and development, is the first of a series of in-depth publications aimed at explaining in a clear and simple manner the implications of the ICPD. The purpose of these publications is to encourage advocacy for the goals of the ICPD, and they are written specifically for government leaders, NGOs and individuals who want to see the ICPD Programme of Action adopted in their own countries. Other subjects that will be covered by this series include: reproductive health; migration; male attitudes; and women and employment.

Brochures

46. The Fund requires for its daily operations a number of general information brochures that can quickly explain the scope of its mandate and activities. The principal brochure features UNFPA, its structure, mandate, activities, funding and geographic reach. A smaller companion piece gives a

shorter summary for those who do not need a more extensive explanation. UNFPA also produces brochures in support of the ICPD and general population awareness.

III. COST MANAGEMENT

47. UNFPA has taken maximum advantage of new technology in producing and disseminating its publications, improving quantity and quality, cutting production costs and enabling a wider choice of suppliers. POPULI and *Dispatches*, for example, are now prepared for press entirely in-house. The timely and accurate publication of the *State of World Population* report in a variety of sites and languages is enabled by electronic communications. Better communications via the Internet and improved software enable quick exchange of proofs and designs between UNFPA and contractors wherever they may be.

48. To carry out its mandate from ECOSOC to promote awareness in both developed and developing countries, UNFPA uses the full range of modern communications media, including print, video, film, radio and electronic channels. To best conserve scarce resources, UNFPA relies on long-established United Nations cost-management procedures and applies them to all UNFPA information materials. The cost-management procedures include competitive bidding for printing and ancillary contracts, public opening of bids, and review and approval of all contracts by an internal Contracts Review Committee. In the print area, the number of copies to be printed for each publication is carefully analysed beforehand to determine the size of the market and to take into consideration, when applicable, past experience and projected demand. As a result, the supply of most UNFPA publications is usually exhausted within an 18-month period while the publication is still up-to-date.

49. Greater use is being made of the Internet to ensure the widest possible dissemination of UNFPA information materials at virtually no cost to the organization. UNFPA has been distributing information materials electronically on the Internet since 1993, starting with ICPD newsletters and briefing kits. In collaboration with the UNFPA-funded Population Information Network (POPIN, located in the United Nations Population Division, Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis), a variety of UNFPA materials are now available via a "gopher" (a widely used type of Internet-accessible database). These include: Basic Facts About UNFPA, UNFPA press releases, the 1995 *State of World Population* report (in English, French and Spanish), *Dispatches* (since September 1995), POPULI (since December 1995) and the 1995 *Population Issues Briefing Kit*. Also available on the gopher are most 1995 statements of the Executive Director and documentation from the UNFPA-led Task Force on ICPD Implementation.

50. The UNFPA survey found a very positive response to its public information on the Internet. Several thought it one of the best information resources produced by UNFPA. They noted that the Internet gopher kept them up-to-date by providing a wealth of information ranging from the full text of conference documents to population-related journals to links to other population resources.

51. In December 1995, UNFPA established a site on the World Wide Web on the Internet (http://www.unfpa.org), initially allowing easy access to published materials included on the gopher. More features, including graphics and sound, are being added.

52. The Web offers UNFPA a new publishing medium. A Web site is not a substitute for printed publications, but it does offer wide distribution at low cost and has many other advantages as well. UNFPA will use the Web to: (a) publicize the audio-visual and print products of the Fund, especially the *State of World Population* report, and to make their text and graphics readily available, (b) add to and update material on ICPD follow-up, and make technical publications available, (c) monitor interest in UNFPA and its publications, and to receive comments and communications from the public; (d) communicate with individuals in governments, the population and development community, NGOs, media and parliamentarians. The UNFPA web site will be linked to United Nations and other sites worldwide.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

53. The Executive Director recommends that the Executive Board take note of the report on the effectiveness of the UNFPA publications programme as contained in document DP/FPA/1996/14, in particular its central role in advocacy in the area of population and development.